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COMMITTEE ON THE EXERCISE OF THE INALIENABLE
RIGHTS OF THE PALESTINIAN PEOPLE

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 212th MEETING

Held at Headquarters, New York,
on Friday, 3 February 1995, at 10.30 a.m.

Temporary Chairman: Mr. Boutros Boutros-Ghali
(Secretary-General of the United Nations)

Chairman: Mr. CISSE (Senegal)

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The meeting was called to order at 10.50 a.m.

ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA (A/AC.183/1995/L.1)

1. The agenda was adopted.

ELECTION OF OFFICERS

2. Mr. ABDELLAH (Tunisia), supported by Mr. BATU (Turkey), nominated Mr. Cissé (Senegal) for re-election to the office of Chairman, Mr. Farhadi (Afghanistan) for re-election to the office of Vice-Chairman and Mr. Cassar (Malta) for re-election to the office of Rapporteur.

3. The TEMPORARY CHAIRMAN said that, if he heard no objection, he would take it that the Committee wished to elect the candidates as officers of the Committee nominated by the representative of Tunisia.

4. It was so decided.

5. Mr. Cissé (Senegal) took the Chair.

STATEMENT BY THE SECRETARY-GENERAL

6. The SECRETARY-GENERAL said that the Committee was meeting on the basis of a General Assembly mandate which had been renewed with the approval of a great majority of Member States. Since the opening session of the Committee in 1994, the Middle East had witnessed further historic and encouraging developments towards the achievement of a comprehensive, just and lasting settlement based on Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973): the Declaration of Principles on Interim Self-Government Arrangements, signed in 1993 by the Palestine Liberation Organization and Israel; the signing in Cairo in May 1994 of the Agreement on the Gaza Strip and the Jericho Area; the withdrawal of Israeli troops from most of those areas; the establishment of the Palestinian Authority and the deployment of the Palestinian Police Force; the signing, in August 1994, of the Agreement on Preparatory Transfer of Powers and Responsibilities regarding the West Bank; and, on 26 October 1994, the signing of the historic peace treaty between Jordan and Israel. It was his earnest hope that those important events would be followed by the full implementation of the Declaration of Principles and progress on the Syrian-Israeli and Lebanese-Israeli tracks of the peace process.

7. While much had been achieved, far more remained to be done. The situation on the ground continued to give cause for concern. Acts of violence carried out by those opposed to peace were reminders that, after decades of bloodshed and distrust, the process of building confidence between Palestinians and Israelis was not only difficult but painful. There was no justification for such deplorable incidents; they cast a pall over the entire process. Yet the only way to overcome the doubts and apprehensions generated by them was to renew the commitment to finding workable arrangements which would enable the two sides to live peacefully together.

8. The negotiations which lay ahead, and the difficult choices they would bring, would require patience, perseverance, and a spirit of compromise at every turn. They must be carried out in good faith. In that connection, he was mindful of the deep concern generated by the decision of the Government of Israel to expand settlements in the occupied territories, about which he had received an urgent letter dated 31 January from the Permanent Observer for Palestine which had been issued as a document of the Security Council and the General Assembly.

9. The hopes generated by the historic agreements reached in 1993 and 1994 could not be allowed to give way to despair. It was disturbing that, after nearly 17 months, those agreements had yet to produce tangible benefits in the daily lives of Palestinians. There had been deep frustration at the continuing lack of improvement in living conditions in the occupied territories, particularly in Gaza, where unemployment was estimated to be higher than 50 or 60 per cent. The expectations created by donor pledges of hundreds of millions of dollars had not been met. He appealed once again for the prompt and effective delivery of the assistance already pledged, but not yet delivered, to the Palestinian people.

10. For his part, he had placed the greatest possible emphasis on sustainable economic and social development in the occupied territories. In June 1994 he had appointed Ambassador Larsen as Special Coordinator to ensure the coordinated work of the United Nations system in response to the urgent needs of the Palestinian people. The importance of his responsibilities had been stressed by the General Assembly in its resolution 49/21 N of 20 December 1994. In close cooperation with the Palestinian Authority and the Palestinian Economic Council for Development and Reconstruction (PECDAR), Mr. Larsen had been active in strengthening local coordination between agencies and programmes of the United Nations system, the Bretton Woods institutions and the donor community. Work was currently under way - by the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the International Labour Organization (ILO), in particular - to launch a massive public works programme in Gaza.

11. He urged all parties to strive for further progress in the negotiations leading to peace. He wished to renew his pledge that the United Nations would spare no effort in support of that process.

12. In conclusion, he expressed his appreciation for the continuing efforts of the Committee in the fulfilment of its mandate, as reconfirmed by General Assembly resolution 49/62 A of 14 December 1994, and wished it every success in its work.

STATEMENT BY THE CHAIRMAN

13. The CHAIRMAN said that the series of events which had occurred in the Middle East since the signing of the Declaration of Principles on Interim Self-Government Arrangements in September 1993, mutual recognition by Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) and the establishment of the Palestinian Authority in Jericho and Gaza should be closely monitored. Temporary setbacks should not impede the peace process. He wished to thank the Secretary-General

for his constant support for the Palestinian cause and the members of the Committee for having re-elected him as Chairman. Senegal remained committed to seeking a just and lasting settlement of the Palestinian question.

STATEMENT BY THE PERMANENT OBSERVER FOR PALESTINE

14. Mr. AL-KIDWA (Observer for Palestine) said that the Committee symbolized the permanent responsibility of the United Nations towards the Palestinian people until such time as a just, comprehensive and effective solution could be found. He referred to the historic developments which had taken place in the Middle East, in particular, the signing, on 13 September 1993, of the Declaration of Principles on Interim Self-Government Arrangements between the PLO and the Government of Israel. A positive result of the Organization's and the Committee's support for the Middle East peace process in general and the Palestinian-Israeli track in particular, had been the implementation of the first phase of the Declaration of Principles in the Gaza Strip and Jericho.

15. Unfortunately, the second phase of the process had been stalled by illegal settlements in the Israeli-occupied territories, continued attempts by the Israelis to alter the de facto status of Jerusalem and continued human rights violations by the occupying forces aimed at derailing the peace process. He hoped that the regional summit meeting held the night before in Cairo would change the situation and that the second phase of the Declaration of Principles could be implemented fully.

16. The international community had a major role to play in ensuing the success of the peace process. In that connection, he thanked the Secretary-General for his deep interest in and constant support for the peace process for appointing a Special Coordinator in the occupied territories and for transferring UNRWA headquarters to the Palestinian territories. Palestine hoped that the role of the United Nations in the peace process would be enhanced and was prepared to cooperate with the Organization in order to achieve a just, comprehensive and lasting settlement in the Middle East.

17. The Secretary-General withdrew.

ORGANIZATION OF WORK

18. Mr. CASSAR (Malta), Rapporteur, said that, at its forty-ninth session, the General Assembly had adopted important resolutions on the question of Palestine which took into account recent major developments and, at the same time, recognized that the Committee had an important role to play in contributing to the peace process that was under way. Those resolutions had once again been adopted by large majorities, reflecting the determination of the international community to advance towards a comprehensive, just and lasting settlement of the question. They also served to encourage the Committee to intensify its efforts even further in the coming year.

19. The Committee would need to consider soon what activities it wished to undertake in 1995 in pursuance of its mandate, having regard to the ongoing peace process and the current developments in the region. The Committee officers had prepared a draft programme of work for 1995 which would be

circulated to members in the near future. In order to facilitate that exercise and other deliberations of the Committee, he proposed the re-establishment of the open-ended working group, in accordance with past practice.

20. The CHAIRMAN said that, as there were no further speakers, he would take it that the Committee wished to adopt the Rapporteur's proposal to re-establish the open-ended working group, with Mr. Cassar (Malta) serving as Chairman and Mr. Chinoy (India) as Vice-Chairman.

21. It was so decided.

OTHER MATTERS

22. The CHAIRMAN said that he would report to the Committee at its next meeting on his participation in the Islamic Conference of Foreign Ministers and the Islamic Summit Conference, held at Casablanca in December 1994.

The meeting rose at 11.30 a.m.